

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Episode 11

Published: 25 March 2016

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Annemarie: Hi I'm your host Annemarie Cross, welcome to another episode of women in leadership podcast. The podcast that empowers you to reach your full potential whether you're already in a leadership role or maybe you are an aspiring leader. Now joining me on today's show is Kendra. L. Kinnison MBA, CPA she's the general manager for Port Royal Ocean Resort and a leadership coach through coach.me, now Kendra serves on the board of directors for the Texas travel industry association and the advisory board of the college of business at Texas A&M University Corpus Christi. She is the immediate past state President of Texas business women and for the last two decades Kendra has served in a leadership positions in a number of community service organizations. Kendra believes there is a habit recipe that will allow each of us to live and work at our best and on today's show Kendra is going to share why it's important to be intentional about remaining curious and continuing to grow, why becoming a teacher and sharing everything you know with those around you counts, as well as facing the hard things as a leader sometimes success is just showing up the next day. So welcome to the show Kendra.

Kendra: Thanks so much Annemarie I'm excited to be here and excited for the project, to get to hear everyone else's stories.

Annemarie: Yeah I'm really looking forward to hearing your insights. But Kendra I'm sure that you have heard the saying "great leaders are born not made", which I think you know personally I'd say it's a really limiting statement especially when you consider there may be people in the work force who have incredible

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potential to become a great leader, yet they have never had the opportunity to develop and nurture their leadership skills because of that belief that leaders are born not made. So when I read through your bio and I heard that you believe there's a habit recipe, you know a number of steps, number of actions that we need to take and when we do follow those actions we can then live and work at our best. What are your thoughts on that saying "great leaders are born not made"?

Kendra: I have to tell you I can't stand it. I don't think it's true at all, I think at its core leadership really is a mindset, a mindset of choosing to take responsibility and choosing to seek solutions. I think we can all choose it and then certainly it's a journey in developing our skills as a leader. So I think we can choose to be a leader and adopt a leadership mindset maybe when our skills are in their infancy perhaps we are not good at leadership yet, but we want to be and I do think there are certain habits some similar for all of us and some very different for each of us that allow us to live and work and lead at our best.

Annemarie: Because I'm sure some of those leaders who we have admired and they've certainly contributed incredible you know strategies and their gifts and intelligence to the table made a huge difference. They didn't just suddenly wake up one day and come forth with all this greatness; it was developed in them, so, so many people who are thinking today oh I don't have the right leadership skills. I don't have what it takes; you know what yes you do, so I'm glad that Kendra you're here to share the insights. So let's dive in, I mean why do you think that it's important to be intentional about remaining curious and that allows us to grow. Let's share a little bit more about that?

Kendra: Sure and I think that's true not just for those who aspire to be leaders, I would say for those that aspire just to have options in life. Our world is a changing one you know I've been working for the last 20 years now, it's hard to believe that sometimes but you realise the only thing that's constant is change, and so if we are not intentional about growing our skills and finding you know new ways to add value I think we'll quickly find ourselves in a difficult position, in a position perhaps that we don't like, and that because we're not adding value our compensation and options are limited, so I think an antidote to that is just to

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stay curious, whether it's you know in a role that you're in, whether it's exploring a new hobbies, whether it's learning about health I think you can manifest yourself in any number of areas, it doesn't just have to be work but again cultivating that mindset, being aware and intentional and thinking about the world around us and how we can interact with it, I just think it is a healthy habit for all of us.

Annemarie: And you talked about change and I think that's so true in this day and age and because of technologies now not only do we often have to deal with change on a local or a national basis but now also on an international basis, a global basis and I think for people who are either aspiring leaders or even in a leadership role that the change and having to remain at the forefront can often be scary and I'd like you to speak a little bit more about this and that is sometimes as leaders we believe, we think, that we need to have all of the answers which in itself is very limiting too, so what sort of things do you share about if we are a leader that's going to remain curious, how not to get stuck in that rut of I have to have all the answers?

Kendra: O sure that's a great point, I think I need to know where to find the answers is perhaps the alternative whether it's a resource or another person, so in my role as general manager of a hotel and resort, gosh there are so many things that I don't know, and I will never know and I've got six directors that are all experts in their area and they should know more than me in all of their areas, so I think you know I think it's my job to know where to find the resources if they get stuck.

Annemarie: Yes

Kendra: If my HR director is stumped on something it's not for me to have the answer it's for me to maybe ask questions or seek resources to help connect her with the answer, not to say that, that happens all that often but yeah I think this notion that we should know everything is like you say a faulty one because it's almost impossible, so you know, know where our strengths are, know the areas that we want to go deep, not wide or the areas where we want to go wide and not deep, and know how to connect with others.

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Annemarie: I think what you've just shared is just so powerful because what it also shows about you as a leader, that you have this confidence that allows you to surround yourself with people who have knowledge in a different area, strengths in a different area, you know sometimes as leaders because we fear that if I don't come across as knowing everything they are going to think less of me, what you have just said is the complete opposite, that you've got such confidence that you do surround yourself with amazing people and you would also create an environment that allows them to shine, to grow, to develop those skills, so that at the end of the day everyone's contributing a unique brilliance and the company continues to grow and overcome challenges and you know be able to face head on the changes that happen in the work place.

Kendra: Absolutely true and I think it comes from perhaps trying it the other way a time or two and realizing how bad that is.

A) You can't know everything. So the pressure you put on yourself to be better than everybody you lead is just; sets us all up for failure and I think there comes a point where you're again you're confident in what you know but you're humble enough to recognize that there are so many things that you can't and probably will never master, so why not join forces and have a team of folks that all complement each other, it's so much more fun

Annemarie: Yeah

Kendra: Having lived a few cycles you know in each of those

Annemarie: Yeah

Kendra: I much prefer the team concept, where everybody is pretty open about our strengths and weaknesses and we allow each other to cover our backs. You know if you're not going to tell people where you're weak they can't fill in for that right?

Annemarie: Yeah

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Kendra: So I'm pretty upfront now days about where I think I add value and where I know that I don't, and where I'm counting on my director or another team member to fill that gap.

Annemarie: And that really brings us beautifully said, nicely into the next point about encouraging us to become a teacher sharing everything that we know with those around us, that in itself for some people is scary because it's kind of like well if I do that then why will people need me, if I share me knowledge and my wisdom around that particular area people won't need me anymore which again is a limiting mindset isn't it?

Kendra: We live in such a transparent world, you know my industry in particular, so the hotel industry you know our revenue figures are pretty much public information, because of the tax structure, the occupancy tax, so you can find out the revenues of any hotel in America just about; certainly in Texas, and then Trip Advisor provides kind of the customer service side of that, so for any given resort you know how they're doing in top line and you know how they're treating their guests, so you can kind of rate the management team, you know it's somewhat public and there is always a demand for folks that can make the people around them better. So I think if you can get the reputation of someone that your team is always a high performing team and an excelling team. You know nobody cares who is specifically doing the work if the team is succeeding everybody is happy and again this balance of confidence and humility comes into play here that if we lift up, we'll just make it a habit to lift up everybody around us all the time, as much as we can a) people like to work; you know the number one way to retain your team is to make them feel valued and make them feel like they are always making progress and learning. I think that's probably the most important trait I've seen in very high performer that I've been around, is that they want to keep moving forward in some way.

Annemarie: Yeah

Kendra: And so by opening a door and teaching, you know you make that possible and then as you hand things off and see other people can actually do it better than you. My revenue manager now is far better,

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he's learnt how to use software you know I've got everything I could out of excel, but he's found a new data analysis software and inside of a couple of months he's taking revenue management to a whole new level than what I was capable of, and it's so exciting to see that you know I don't know there's not much that brings me more joy than seeing a person take a nugget of an idea that I shared and just go with it and really make something special.

Annemarie: I think what you've just said is also gold for those people who are in a leadership team or overseeing a team and hesitant to teach and grow or allow the growth of their team, because the stronger the team the more you can collaborate, the more results, productivity, performance, profitability all those things will certainly shine too. What you said before and I just wanted to mention that again because it's so true that people will leave organizations not because they don't like their roles, but because their leader, their supervisor is not allowing them to grow, is not you know encouraging collaboration. So you'll find often when people do want to leave it's because of that leader, so you know as leaders we sometimes need to look at ourselves and ask, am I creating an environment which is empowering my team to be the best that they can be, and to learn and to grow?

Kendra: Sure high performers have all the options in the world, I mean you know you better be a place they want to be because they don't have to be anywhere.

Annemarie: Yeah, and you know when you do empower your team to be the best they can be such as the example you gave about the revenue manager, that allows you then as the leader to expand because I think we never can get as you said stagnant in what we know and how we show up and so it allows us, it gives us space to then better ourselves, where do we need to expand and grow, so you know you don't have to carry that team, they are empowered and you know that they are stepping fully and achieving in the roles and the tasks that they are set. Have you found this too?

Kendra: Yes absolutely you know there's no shortage of, again change; you know whether it's the online travel agencies, whether it's new laws and regulations, whether it's trying to meet our guests expectations

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in a unique way, there's any number of things to think about and if we get stuck in you know doing the same thing for too long, it means that we are not able to look ahead and plan the next evolution and the next improvement, so it does provide space to do that and to come up with new ideas and new ways to grow and challenge the team.

Annemarie: Now sometimes we can plan the best that we can, we can implement the right strategies and we have an outcome that we want to achieve yet despite all of the hard work that we put into that, the results that we want just don't come to fruition, and as a leader that can really strike home and have us again you know doubt ourselves, I would love you to share facing the hard things as leaders, sometimes success is just showing up the next day. I'd love your wisdom around this?

Kendra: Yes well I think this is one of the best or worst kept secrets of leadership and for me and some of the folks I have talked to you don't learn this until you experience it yourself and then you feel like there is something wrong with you and then you realize everybody else experiences this too, I mean leadership is sometimes awful. The decisions you know I joke that usually when a decision comes to me, if it's a decision I have to make I have to choose between bad and worse, but there's usually not a good outcome and sometimes that can; gosh it can just paralyze us and make you not want to get up in the morning it can make you doubt your abilities, your worthiness there's all sorts of ways that can impact this and I found that if we would literally just show up, just engage the conversation or the dialogue, or the problem or whatever it might be enough days in a row, we'll get through it, you know it's not always going to be fun, the outcome may not even be the outcome that we're seeking but we will get through it the sun will rise again the next day and we'll have a newfound respect for ourselves, really I think there have been times and perhaps you can relate or others can relate where when things are hard we've walked away, when things got really hard, I can think of a few situations that I's love to have back where I just really got overwhelmed and made the choice to kind of remove myself from the environment, in a respectful way, but still I chose to walk away as opposed to really see it through the full extent of the challenge, just to see what the outcome might be,

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and I think now having sat through enough of these, it's a lot more fun to get through the valley and get to the next peak and make a decision, as opposed to making a decision in those valleys.

Annemarie: Yeah and I love that and I think as a leader just showing up having that commitment to gain the positivity in it to say okay let's have a look at what do we do? What can we change? What do we need to implement that perhaps wasn't there and keeping that focus because that's when the team really looks to you as a leader? And again just showing up and asking those questions sometimes they can be difficult questions that then empowers them to say okay you know what we can do that as well. So let me ask you a question, you know hindsight is such a valuable teacher often would there be anything other than what you've shared already, would there be anything that you might do sooner or implement a lot quicker knowing the things that you know now?

Kendra: Yeah I think they are two different areas, one is confronting difficult people situations, so let say you're managing a team member that is just not performing very well

Annemarie: Yes

Kendra: I think as a new leader you're just very hesitant, you're hesitant to even know what to do there and often times you let the problem fester until there's a blow up, and I think now I've learnt, I call it the gap conversation, I try to have it as soon as I recognize their gap and the way I phrase the conversation is, "you know for your role or for this position the expectations are this, and from what we're seeing you're performing at y and there's a gap there, so let's talk about how we're going to fill the gap." And by phrasing the conversation in that way early on by acknowledging it, not making it personal, not saying it's their fault, just calling attention to the fact that there is a gap between the expectation and the performance often times will lead to a resolution, person may actually realise they can perform and do it, or they may say you know what I don't want to do that and you know walk away. There's any number of outcomes then that become an option, so I think having that conversation early and often is something that I wish I had learnt, much earlier in my career and the second one is 'personal stress management'. I think this is one of the last

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aspects of leadership that we take seriously and often times we have to have a personal health crisis before we listen to this one, but there are a number of; we talk about habit recipes there are a number of habits, you know meditation, prayer, exercise, napping, I mean there are just any number of things that we can do to keep our tolerance for stress and our ability to manage stress at a healthier level, which then enables us to then make decision better, to stay calm in challenging situations, to really be the leader that our teams want us to be and not an emotional basket case, and so I think learning and developing those habits early on can be very valuable as well.

Annemarie: And just something that I wanted to mention and we've shared more about this before we started recording. You were saying how the habit recipe is quite unique for each and every one of us. Speak a little more about this, because just in case there are some people there that are sitting with their pens poised, waiting for you to share the step1, step 2. Let's go through the steps for the habit recipe?

Kendra: Well I think there are different areas, so I think we all; you know we have to be personally productive, and efficient and organised and so there are any number of habits that we can adopt, but we better have a consistent way of doing that. With our systems again our health and stress management to me is a leader those kind of go together. It is very hard to be an effective leader if you are not taking care of your health and your stress management. That isn't to say that you can't have health problems, certainly we all do, but you're intentional about navigating those in a healthy way and that you have habits again that support that you know relationship habits, you know all kinds of things, you really can't break it down into those consistent daily actions that really add up who we are as people.

Annemarie: And I think also to it's being mindful of what's not working and so often we can continue to relive a cycle that is draining us from our energy, from our productivity and you really need to take a step back and ask yourselves what do I need to do that will enable me not to have to completely revisit this particular area which is just not supporting me and then changing that and creating a habit putting it in the habit recipe that you know when I do it this way, when I approach it this way the results that I get they are

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supporting me, they are supporting my team and of course I'm not getting stressed and I have to say Kendra that this is 11 the episode 11, the women that I have spoken to in the previous episodes where they themselves found that they were in a crisis, a personal crisis, was all about not recognising the little warning signs about stress, and not taking the time to create a habit via meditation that will relieve you of that stress and often when we don't do that the situation itself will go you know if you're not going to do that to manage it, I'll manage it for you and it can fester in something to do with our health and we certainly don't want that to happen. So Kendra what would be one last piece of advice that you would like to share with listeners today?

Kendra: Yeah so this one; people tell me this sounds a little funny when we say it but, I say start very small and let momentum build naturally, so let's say this is my favourite habit to start with, you want to start flossing, right I did this several years ago, finally dentist okay I'm going to get it done, and I wanted to floss very day so the way to do it, is to commit to flossing I tooth every day. So it's hard for any of us to convince ourselves that we don't have enough time or energy to literally floss one tooth and so that's the commitment, that's success if I floss one tooth every day I am successful. Now the reality is if you are going to floss one tooth, chances are you're going to floss them all, but if you set that standard as just one even on our worst day where we're barely keeping our eyes open falling into bed, we can still remember and floss that one tooth. It's true writing a book, it's true for anything you know ding push ups or whatever it is you want to do, if we will start with the tiniest increment possible and start it that and let the momentum build, we really can do anything, and we just have to have a little bit of patience and trust that kind of our natural habit wiring will take over, I'd like to say that habits are a super power that we all haven't learnt how to use them yet and I think the trick is to again start very small, let it build, kind of stay under the resistance radar and go that route.

Annemarie: I so agree with that I mean when we think about the habits that are perhaps not supporting us it has taken a couple of times; a number of times for us to really build and imbed that negative habit. So what you're saying is you know start small, allow momentum and as you continue to do that you show up

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every day flossing that one tooth and heck while you're there let's just do all the rest too. If you do that continuously then it just becomes part of the system, part of the habit you do every day, and that's the same across other habits. Good habits that we want to implement in our lives and of course in our careers as well. Look it has been an absolute pleasure have you joining us today, how can people get in contact with you?

Kendra: So my website is Kendrakinnison.com, or on Twitter [@kkinnison](https://twitter.com/kkinnison) or I guess directly through [@coach.me](https://coach.me) [@coach.me/kendra](https://coach.me/kendra)

Annemarie: Terrific and of course we'll put all of those details on the show notes. Now it's over to you Kendra and I want you to join the conversation, let us know what is one habit that you know when you start small and allow it to grow through momentum, that's going to make a significant difference in your life, in your career as your aspiring to become a leader or maybe take your leadership to the next level, we want to know what that is? To join the conversation all you need to do is go to annemariex.com/podcast11 leave you comment below the show notes and we certainly look forward to reading those. The link again is annemariex.com/podcast11.

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And of course that brings us to an end of another fantastic show; I know you have taken a lot with you today from hearing Kendra sharing her insights. I hope you will join me again next week. Remember to subscribe to our iTunes channel, the link is annemarietcross.com/podcastiTunes. Subscribing to our channel means that you are going to be the very first person to learn about our new episodes and be inspired and empowered every week. Again that link is annemarietcross.com/podcastiTunes, and if you've got a couple of minutes while you're over there leave a comment, let us know what was your greatest aha! And leave a rating too, that would be super awesome. So until next week have a great week, bye for now. Bye Kendra.